

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS TO FRESNO CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT
FOR NOT HAVING A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Strategic Management Of Change Course

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ABSTRACT

The Fresno City Fire Department in Fresno, California, has not had a strategic plan for over fifteen years. This condition is highly unusual in most paid fire departments, especially those that are considered to be medium or large in organizational size. Accordingly, this condition rarely exists in other public and private sector organizations.

The Fresno City Fire Department is considered by industry standards to be a medium-sized department. The Department provides safety services from sixteen strategically located fire stations that cover the city's 100 square miles. The fire fighting force includes 237 members and administers an annual budget of approximately \$22 million.

The purpose of this research project was to explore the effects, if any, to the work force of the Fresno City Fire Department as a result of the department not having a strategic plan for the past fifteen years.

The research undertaken for this project included various conclusions and opinions from both private and public sector experts and professionals, as well as the completion of survey instruments from fire departments and members to measure any effects.

Historical and action research methodology was employed as a means to answer the following four questions:

1. Are there compelling reasons for a fire department to have a strategic plan?

2. What are the potential negative effects to a fire department for not having a strategic plan?
3. Has the lack of a strategic plan affected the morale of the members of the Fresno Fire Department?
4. Do most fire departments continue to use a strategic plan even during these turbulent and uncertain times for the fire service?

The findings of the research concluded that there are compelling reasons for fire departments to develop and maintain strategic plans for their organizations. Conversely, there are negative effects to an organization for not having a strategic plan, which includes not being prepared for the changing environment and a general reduction in organizational productivity.

The implications to Fresno Fire Department for not having a strategic plan, as learned from the survey, include decreased employee morale and productivity. The survey results also indicated that the majority of fire departments continue to maintain strategic plans even during these uncertain times.

Based upon the literature researched and the results of the two survey instruments, it is recommended the Fresno Fire Department embark upon developing a five-year written strategic plan in the near future.

Further, the five-year strategic plan should include the input from various groups of people throughout the organization, including the rank and file members which are stakeholders in the organization.

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INTRODUCTION

The Fresno City Fire Department has been plagued by low employee morale for the past several years. This behavioral phenomenon has occurred, for the most part, from the downward spiraling trend of the department's operating budget.

Employees of the Fresno City Fire Department feel a sense of hopelessness and belief that the best days of the fire service are clearly behind them. They express their future as being one of uncertainty. The results of this fact have manifested itself in decreased employee productivity, a loss of employee enthusiasm and creativity, and feelings of frustration and hopelessness about their careers and the department.

Further, employees feel that fire administration is not taking active steps to lead the department in a positive direction. The latter issue causes exhaustive work for fire administration personnel through problem solving efforts and responses to employee complaints and grievances.

The purpose of this research was to determine if the lack of a strategic plan was a contributing factor in the decreased morale of the fire fighting members of the Fresno Fire Department.

Historical and Action research methodology was used to answer the following questions:

1. Are there compelling reasons for a fire department to have a strategic plan?
2. What are the potential negative effects to a fire department for not having a strategic plan?
3. Has the lack of a strategic plan affected the morale of the members of the Fresno Fire Department?
4. Do most fire departments continue to use a strategic plan even during these turbulent and uncertain times for the fire service?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Fresno is located in the central region of California. The city is 324 feet above sea level, primarily flat, arid, and exceptionally well suited for agricultural operations. Fresno is about midway between two of California's more well known cities: Los Angeles and San Francisco. The city is approximately 100 square miles in size and maintains a population of 409,000.

In 1976, the voters of California sent a strong message via the ballot box to the Legislature and those charged with the responsibility of managing government. This "will of the voters" was known in California as Proposition 13. Proposition 13, in essence, limited the amount of property taxes that could be collected to 1% of the assessed valuation.

The impact of this measure has severely restricted the funding to state and local governments, which resulted in considerable reductions in government operations.

Soon after the passage of Proposition 13, the effects were being felt at the local government level. It was common practice for several years during the budget process for fire administration personnel at Fresno City Fire Department to submit three separate budgets. The budgets submitted contained three different percentage reduction proposals: one was a 2-1/2 percent reduction, one was a 5 percent reduction, and one was a 7-1/2 percent reduction. It was not determined until near the end of the budget process which budget reduction proposal would be imposed on the department.

After fifteen years of unrelenting budget reductions, the department's morale spiraled into near despair. Fire personnel had witnessed the loss of the airport fire protection to a public safety group; fire inspectors were converted into "civilian" positions; dispatching services were taken from the fire department and given to the police department; the department's twenty-year-old paramedic program was eliminated along with 19 fire fighting positions; and five chief officer positions were removed from the department's lineup. Career advancement was gloomy, and any chance for self-actualization seemed almost unattainable.

The fact that today more resources are being directed to law enforcement creates an additional strain on the already

limited general fund budgets. Many fire departments currently feel their budgets are being reduced just to free resources to support the addition of more police officers. Whether this is true or not was not the subject of discussion. However, this issue created an additional concern which assisted in furthering low morale.

During this entire period in question, the former fire administration maintained there was no reason to develop a strategic plan since the future was dependent on the annual budget. Hence, the budget was the strategic plan. This action was contrary to effective management practices.

There has been demonstrated a significant decrease in employee morale with the Fresno City Fire Department, which has created a corresponding decrease in organizational productivity. Because this organization has already experienced considerable reductions in its resources, it could not afford to also have significant decreases in its productivity.

This report fulfills the requirements to an applied research project for the Strategic Management Of Change course of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

This project is an application of Unit 1: Introduction to Change Management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A relevant literature review was conducted for this project with the objective of determining if there was sufficient information available to support the need for strategic planning. Accordingly, there was a need to determine if there were any implications for not developing and maintaining such plans.

Compelling Need For A Strategic Plan

An incredible number of companies, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations of all types are plagued by a lack of planning and by deficiencies in sharing what plans they do have with those responsible for getting the job done. Amazingly, these organizations continue to exist. Sooner or later many of them find themselves struggling to survive instead of striving to achieve at higher levels (Herman, 1988).

Why does this happen? Usually it is because the people responsible for setting the direction and guiding others are confused. They are not sure where the organization is going, yet they feel they are making progress. Their position may be different than it was yesterday, but they are not sure where they are supposed to be tomorrow.

The problem in this case is the lack of planning in all

facets of the organization, particularly among senior leaders.

The result is that the organization just "floats." This condition lends credence to the popular quotation "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there."

(Herman, 1988)

The warning cries of a changing future have been discussed ad nauseam over the past few years. The increasingly competitive environment has demanded that many organizations undergo significant and profound change if they are to remain vital in this increasingly changing world. The management of large-scale organizational change has become a critical task for managers (Mohrman, Mohrman, Ledford, Cummings, Lawler, and Associates, 1989).

The impetus for this change has stemmed from three significant areas that are influencing both one's personal and professional lives. They are: 1) The marketplace is now global; 2) Technology is advancing at an accelerating pace and quickly flows throughout the world; 3) The expansion of new values and life-styles that have occurred over the past twenty-five years.

The power of globalization is of a magnitude greater than that of the colonization that crept slowly through the world during earlier centuries. It is happening faster, affecting

more people, and creating constant shifting in the relative standing among industrialized nations (Pascarella, 1989). Although this phenomenon may not directly affect fire departments in the present, it certainly will have an impact on the near future.

Technology is also advancing at an accelerated pace and quickly flows throughout the world. Overnight, a new technology can change what a company makes, how it makes it, and who its competitors are. In the fire service, technology will have a far-reaching effect on how services will be delivered and managed.

Over the past quarter century, there has been an explosion of new values and life-styles. Mixed with the old, they have created staggering diversity that makes old assumptions about the roles people play obsolete. Through both roles, people are expressing their values as they demand that more attention be paid to quality (Pascarella, 1989). As contemporary fire chiefs already know, the fire service continues to be challenged as to its value to the community.

In Ian Mitroff and Thierry Pauchant's book, "We're So Big And Powerful Nothing Bad Can Happen To Us," the authors examine the gap between people's ability to acknowledge intellectually that significant if not radical changes are

required if people are to manage their environment and the incredible denial that exists on the emotional level of the need for substantial change. It is precisely this gap, they state, that makes change so difficult (Mitroff and Pauchant, 1990).

As the authors further studied companies in crises, they learned that merely more than fine-tuning was needed. Instead, revolutionary change in management thought and practice was necessary. The basic conceptions and principles by which virtually all organizations operate are inherently flawed and outmoded. The companies that had the most serious of crises were those that simply embodied those outmoded conceptions to a greater degree (Mitroff and Pauchant, 1990).

To choose a direction, a leader must first have developed a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. This image, which is called vision, may be as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or mission statement.

The critical point is that a vision articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization; a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists (Bennis and Nanus, 1985).

A vision is a target that beckons. It is a future state that bridges the present to the future of the organization.

When the organization has a clear sense of its purpose, direction, and desired future state, and when this image is widely shared, individuals are able to find their own roles both in the organization and in the larger society of which they are a part.

A shared vision of the future also suggests measures of effectiveness for the organization and for all its parts. It helps people distinguish what is good and what is bad for the organization and what it is worthwhile to want to achieve. And most important, it makes it possible to distribute decision making widely (Bennis and Nanus, 1985).

Strategic planning is a form of decision making. It takes the vision and mission of an organization and matches the services and activities with changed and changing environmental conditions. Strategic planning provides a framework for the improvement and restructuring of programs, management, collaborations and evaluation of the organization's progress (Ross, 1995).

If there is no planning, then there is no plan for the future. Today's changing environment will not be addressed for the tomorrow. Leadership responsibilities, such as vision, will be neglected and the organization will suffer.

Potential Negative Effects Of Not Having A Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is, by its very nature, broad-based and conceptual. The strategic plan addresses the long-term critical issues facing the organization in the future. It also deals with the future in terms of strategy, long-term objectives, and integrated programs for accomplishing those objectives (Morrisey, Below and Acomb, 1988).

Strategic planning is rooted in future-oriented, proactive thinking that anticipates change and adopts long-range strategies to meet the demands of that change. Strategic planning often steers the organization in new directions and adapts company resources to changing conditions, which permit leaders to create a desired future, rather than reacting to an unpleasant future that is thrust upon them. Strategic planning answers the question, "Where are we going in this organization?" (Willits, 1996).

The primary responsibility for developing and updating the strategic plan rests with the fire chief and senior executive staff (Morrisey, et al, 1988). The most successful fire chiefs of today recognize that planning for the future needs of a fire department is the most important job of fire department managers (Willits, 1996).

One of the first steps in the strategic planning process is to develop a mission and vision statement. Mission

statements give an organization's purpose for being. In comparing and contrasting mission-driven organizations to rule-driven organizations, one learns that mission-driven organizations are more efficient, effective, innovative, flexible, and have a higher morale than rule-driven organizations (Willits, 1996).

Developing a vision statement for an organization does many of the same things as its mission statement. It serves to focus the members of the organization on the future. In the 1992 "Shared Vision Report" of Scottsdale, Arizona, the visioning process included some guiding principles which provide a basis for visioning. They included:

- No one has a crystal ball.
- The best ideas are seldom obvious.
- Deliberate actions ultimately cost no more than leaving everything to chance.
- Nothing worthwhile is achievable without cooperation and commitment.
- What each person in the organization thinks matters.
- All actions, large and small, have consequences.
- The future doesn't just happen. People create it.

Visioning is not a predictor or projection of some future events, but rather an expression or description of what the

future can be if the organization works in a coordinated and strategic manner (Willits, 1996).

California State Fire Marshal Ronny J. Coleman states, "Anyone operating in today's environment without a plan is in trouble" (Coleman, 1994). Even in the now dated but highly acclaimed document "America Burning," the need for major change in the fire service was recommended (Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, 1972). The key to successful planning is to understand that one is readying the organization to meet the future (Carter, 1988).

The budgetary process is also a planning exercise. While the quality of planning may vary, the development of a budget is also the development of a plan. Inescapably, a future state of affairs is envisioned and priorities are set. Therefore, to avoid separate and perhaps conflicting planning efforts, strategic planning and the annual budget must be integrated (Boyd, 1997).

"What isn't planned today won't be done tomorrow" is a well worn comment that states succinctly the results of not planning. Neglecting to plan because of procrastination or a laissez-faire attitude results in letting the environment control the organization rather than the organization controlling the environment. Without planning, management

surrenders the destiny of the organization to fate (American Management Associates [AMA], 1982).

Other managers may simply go through what they believe to be the motions of long-range planning. They prepare a forecast or budget based on last year's figures raised by a percentage in line with inflation and delude themselves that they have made a long-range plan.

Another important consideration with strategic planning includes community involvement. Most experts on strategic planning for local government recommend that all stakeholders, including the public, from neighborhood and business organizations to service users and recipients of public support be involved in the planning process. Consciously or not, every community also has a vision of its common future (Woodmansee, 1994.)

Among the most important reasons for developing strategic plans are the consequences of not making them. There are few organizations with managers sufficiently astute to be able to grow without the benefit of long-range planning. Day-to-day details can, if permitted, completely take up a manager's time. If he or she is completely overwhelmed by daily decisions, the manager will not have time to look ahead for trouble, opportunities, or trends (AMA, 1982).

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

The research procedure used in preparing this research project began with a literature review at the Learning Resource Center on the campus of the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The literature review focused on one specific topic: strategic planning.

The literature search sought authoritative sources that addressed a wide range of opinions regarding the many facets of planning, both in the public and private sectors. The search was intended to identify nationally accepted practices and current trends affecting the same. Both the private and public sectors were compared and contrasted to determine if there were differences that needed to be considered for public sector planning. The research concluded there was no significant difference in public and private organizations.

Two survey instruments were also developed and administered. One survey was sent to 25 randomly selected fire captains on the Fresno Fire Department. The purpose of the survey was to determine firsthand if there had been a real or perceived loss in employee morale and performance due to Fresno Fire Department not having a strategic plan (see Appendix A). Of the 25 surveys distributed, 20 (80%) were

completed and returned.

A number of specific questions were asked regarding their opinions on the need for a strategic plan; if there was a negative effect to employee morale when there was no plan; if there was a negative effect on employee performance when there was no plan; and if they believed a strategic plan was an effective tool to lead and manage an organization.

A second survey was sent to 30 fire departments across the country that served populations ranging from 100,000 to 500,000 persons, which were considered to be similar in size to Fresno. The purpose of the survey was to determine if other fire departments used strategic plans in these uncertain times (see Appendix B). Accordingly, survey questions were used to determine if the lack of a strategic plan would have an effect on employee morale and organizational performance. Of the 30 surveys sent, only 18 (60%) were returned.

The data from both surveys was analyzed to determine if there was a relational value between the literature review and survey responses.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumed: Only knowledgeable individuals experienced in the subject of planning for organizational effectiveness were the authors of the written materials that were used in the

research, and that these same individuals were honest and unbiased in their research and opinions.

That all surveys would be answered honestly by persons with sufficient knowledge about the subject matter and the current conditions of their respective fire departments to render appropriate responses to the given questions.

Limitations: The research materials analyzed were not necessarily representative of all experts on the subject of organizational planning since only a limited number of references were reviewed during the research.

That the information gathered from the survey instruments to other fire departments was not inclusive of the opinions of all fire departments since only 30 departments were surveyed.

Accordingly, the fire departments surveyed were all metropolitan and generally relative in size and structure to Fresno Fire Department.

That the information gathered from the Fresno Fire Department Captains' survey instrument was not inclusive of the opinions of all the department's Captains since only 25 were surveyed. Accordingly, since only captains were queried, the opinions were limited only to the rank of captain and not all the other ranks in the department.

Definitions

Employee Morale: The level of individual psychological well-being of a member of a fire department organization.

Employee Performance: A measurable behavior in which an individual in an organization efficiently carries out the actions prescribed by the employer.

Organizational Performance: Measurable behaviors in which a group of employees carries out the actions prescribed by the leadership of the organization.

Strategic Plan: A document outlining a prescribed plan for a desired future state in an organization.

RESULTS

The analysis and interpretation of the data included the compilation of the surveys and categorization of the responses submitted for the survey questions. The surveys were separated into two groups: The external survey group and the internal survey group. The information gathered from both groups was analyzed and compared and contrasted to the literature review.

Accordingly, the information gathered was analyzed to determine if it could provide answers to the following four stated research questions:

1. Are there compelling reasons for a fire department to have a strategic plan?

Based upon the literature review completed, there was sufficient supporting literature to compel an organization to develop strategic plans. Without exception, the literature review overwhelmingly supported the need for strategic plans.

Analyzation of the individual survey question responses from both the internal and external surveys also revealed that there was considerable support for the development and utilization of strategic plans.

2. What are the potential negative effects to a fire department for not having a strategic plan?

As discovered in the literature review, not only were strategic plans seen as essential to an organization, but there were considerable warnings also given to those organizations that were absent such plans because of the ever-changing and uncertain future. Additionally, organizations that involve themselves with planning activities are more efficient and effective.

As learned from the surveys, most respondents believed strategic planning was an effective management tool, and the consequences for not having such a plan could result in lower productivity and employee morale.

3. Has the lack of a strategic plan affected the morale of the members of the Fresno Fire Department?

The internal survey revealed that 85% of the respondents believed that the lack of a strategic plan for Fresno Fire Department did have a negative effect on employee morale. Further, 70% believed there was a decrease in employee performance, and 70% stated they also had a lower opinion of administration staff because of the lack of a strategic plan.

4. Do most fire departments continue to use a strategic plan even during these turbulent and uncertain times for the fire service?

The external survey revealed that 89% of the departments surveyed continue to use strategic plans in these turbulent times, and 100% recommended that fire departments have a strategic plan.

The survey results were as follows.

The External Survey Group

1. By industry standards, what size is your department considered to be?

Small	0	(0%)
Medium	11	(61%)
Large	7	(41%)

2. Does your fire department have a strategic plan?

Yes	16	(88%)
No	2	(11%)

3. How many years does your plan cover?

1	0	(0%)
2	0	(0%)
3	1	(.5%)
4	0	(0%)
5	8	(44%)
5+	8	(44%)
N/A	2	(11.5%)

4. Does your department follow the plan?

Always	8	(44%)
Sometimes	6	(35%)
Never	2	(11.5%)
N/A	2	(11.5%)

5. Do you believe the plan is an effective tool to manage and lead your organization?

Yes	16	(89%)
No	0	(0%)
No opinion	0	(0%)
N/A	2	(11%)

6. Have you ever had a succession of years when you did not have a plan?

Yes	10	(59%)
No	3	(17%)
Unknown	3	(17%)
N/A	2	(11.5%)

7. If yes, did you notice a difference in the morale of your employees?

Yes	5	(30%)
No	2	(11%)
N/A	7	(41%)
No Response	4	(22%)

8. If you currently did not have a strategic plan, do you believe it would have a negative effect on your employees' morale?

Yes	6	(35%)
No	4	(24%)
Unknown	8	(44%)

9. If you currently did not have a strategic plan, do you believe it would have a negative effect on the performance of the organization?

Yes	10	(55%)
No	2	(11.5%)
Unknown	4	(24%)
No Response	2	(11.5%)

10. Do you recommend that fire departments have a strategic plan?

Yes	18	(100%)
No	0	(0%)

The Internal Survey Group

1. I was unaware that the department has not had a written strategic plan for several years.

Strongly agree	5	(25%)
Agree	5	(25%)
Disagree	4	(20%)
Strongly disagree	6	(30%)

2. I believe it is very important that an organization such as the Fresno Fire Department have a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	17	(85%)
Agree	3	(15%)
Disagree	0	(0%)
Strongly disagree	0	(0%)

3. I believe most organizations similar to the Fresno Fire Department have written strategic plans.

Strongly agree	8	(40%)
Agree	7	(35%)
Disagree	5	(25%)
Strongly disagree	0	(0%)

4. The lack of a written strategic plan for the Fresno Fire Department causes me to have a lower opinion of fire administration personnel.

Strongly agree	9	(45%)
Agree	5	(25%)
Disagree	4	(20%)
Strongly disagree	2	(10%)

5. I believe there is a negative effect on employee morale when there is not a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	10	(50%)
Agree	7	(35%)
Disagree	3	(15%)
Strongly disagree	0	(0%)

6. I believe there is a negative effect on employee performance when there is not a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	8	(40%)
Agree	6	(30%)
Disagree	6	(30%)
Strongly disagree	0	(0%)

7. I believe a written strategic plan is an effective tool to manage and lead an organization.

Strongly agree	17	(85%)
Agree	3	(15%)
Disagree	0	(0%)
Strongly disagree	0	(0%)

8. I do not believe strategic plans should have employee input.

Strongly agree	0	(0%)
Agree	2	(10%)
Disagree	6	(30%)
Strongly disagree	12	(60%)

9. I would personally feel more “ownership” in this organization if I could have input into a strategic plan.

Strongly agree	10	(50%)
Agree	9	(45%)
Disagree	0	(0%)
Strongly disagree	1	(5%)

10. My personal morale would not change toward this organization if we had a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	2	(10%)
Agree	4	(20%)
Disagree	8	(40%)
Strongly disagree	6	(30%)

DISCUSSION

How can leaders and managers determine how their organizations should respond to the increasingly turbulent environments in which these organizations operate? How should leaders respond to dwindling or unpredictable resources; new public expectations; demographic changes; deregulations; upheavals in the national, state, and local economies; and new roles for public, nonprofit, and business organizations? One such way is through the use of strategic planning (Bryson, 1988).

The purpose of this study was to determine what the implications may have been to the Fresno City Fire Department for not having a strategic plan over the past several years. Even though this study did not seek to identify how the lack of a plan may have manifested itself in particular ways, it did examine if there was a correlation to the chronic low morale problem within the department.

Over the past twenty-five years, strategic planning has become a standard part of managerial thinking and practice in the business world. Only recently, however, have leaders and managers in the public and nonprofit sectors become aware of how strategic planning can help their organization (Bryson, 1988).

A strategic plan is developed so that the organization can continue to be successful by producing products for which there is a demand or providing necessary services in an effective and efficient manner (Ross, 1995).

Strategic planning is based on the premise that leaders and managers of organizations must be effective strategists if their organizations are to fulfill their missions and satisfy their constituents in the years ahead. The keystone to strategic planning is *strategic thinking and acting*.

Long-range planning differs from strategic planning in that long-range planning specifies goals and objectives and translates them into current budgets and work programs. Strategic planning focuses on identifying and resolving *issues*. When one explores the cause of low employee morale, one must examine the issues that are causing it.

If an organization does not have a plan, the organization drifts along by the current of influence. Influence can be either a positive or negative force depending on where the influence is generated from and for what reasons. This organizational "drifting" is what allows an organization to fall into the trap of complacency and lose its competitive advantage.

Some organizations, even though they do not have a

strategic plan, still seem to manage to keep their organizations functioning. Such is the case with Fresno Fire Department. Its continued ability to survive is, perhaps, a result of the driving forces of many concerned individuals that really care and influence the department.

Strategic planning is not the exclusive job of management. The planning process and product are diminished if those who want to participate cannot find a constructive channel for their energy and desire (Boyd, 1997). When individuals feel that they can make a difference and that they can improve their work environment through their participation, they are more likely to bring vigor and enthusiasm to their work (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Thus, employees should be involved in the planning process.

The results analyzed in the internal survey clearly indicated a lower employee morale due to the lack of a strategic plan. Accordingly, employees had a lower opinion of administration personnel for the same reason. This is believed to be a demonstration of a lack of confidence in their administration. This statement does not suggest that the lack of a plan is the sole reason for low morale, but rather it is a contributing factor of this complex phenomena.

The external surveys produced similar results but to a much lesser degree. This may be explained by the fact that chief officers completed the surveys and may have a different opinion of the status of employee morale. Or perhaps their organizations are not experiencing low morale.

The findings of this study indicated the implications to Fresno City Fire Department for not having a strategic plan include lower employee morale and productivity. To what degree the lower employee productivity has had on the organization was not measured in this study. However, since the public are the stakeholders in all fire department operations, and public funds support Fresno Fire Department, any decrease in employee or organizational productivity is a concern that must be addressed. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of the analysis of the literature reviewed for this research project supported conclusively that fire departments should embark upon developing and maintaining strategic plans. Further, the external survey results indicated that most fire departments have strategic plans, and all fire departments surveyed recommended the use of strategic plans.

The internal survey results indicated department members had lower employee morale due to the lack of a strategic plan.

Further, the survey indicated employees believe that strategic plans are an effective management tool and should have employee input when the plan is being developed. Based on the foregoing, the following is recommended as a product of this research:

1. The Fresno Fire Department embark upon developing a five-year written strategic plan in the near future.
11. The five-year strategic plan should include the input from various groups of people throughout the organization, including the rank and file members, which are stakeholders in the organization.

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APPENDIX A

James L. Christiansen
 Fire Bureau Chief of Operations
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 450 'M' Street
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July 26, 1998

Dear Fellow Fire Service Professional,

I am a second-year student in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. A partial requirement for this four-year course includes the completion of an applied research paper each year. This year I am researching the need for organizations to have a strategic plan during these turbulent and uncertain times of change. Completion of this particular research project will meet the requirements of the Strategic Management of Change course I recently completed.

It would be greatly appreciated if you or one of your staff personnel would answer the following ten questions by circling the most correct answer **and returning this to me as soon as possible**. The information provided will assist me greatly with my research. I have included a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your convenience. Thank you very much for your time.

What is the name of your fire department?

1. By industry standards, what size is your department considered to be?

Small Medium Large

2. Does your fire department have a strategic plan?

Yes No

3. How many years does your plan cover?

1 2 3 4 5 5+ N/A

4. Does your department follow the plan?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

5. Do you believe the plan is an effective tool to manage and lead your organization?

Yes No No opinion N/A

6. Have you ever had a succession of years when you did not have a plan?

Yes No Unknown N/A

7. If yes, did you notice a difference in the morale of your employees?

Yes No N/A

8. If you currently did not have a strategic plan, do you believe it would have a negative effect on your employees' morale?

Yes No Unknown

9. If you currently did not have a strategic plan, do you believe it would have a negative effect on the performance of the organization?

Yes No Unknown

10. Do you recommend that fire departments have a strategic plan?

Yes No

Any additional comments you wish to make?

APPENDIX B

James L. Christiansen

Dear Fresno City Fire Department Captain,

I am a second-year student in the National Fire Academy's four-year Executive Fire Officer Program. Part of the requirements for attendance to this program include the submission of an applied research paper every year. This year I am researching the implications to our department for not having a written strategic plan. Strategic plans are typically designed to be a working plan of one to five years in duration, and they are considered to be "road maps" for an organization. As you may be aware, this department has not had a written strategic plan for fifteen years.

As part of my research I am randomly surveying 25 Captains in an effort to determine what effect, if any, there has been to the employees of this department for not having such a plan. You have been randomly drawn to be one of the survey group. I selected Captains because I believe you are closest to the daily operations and have the best perspective of what the problem areas of the department are. Your help with my research is essential and greatly appreciated. When you have answered the following questions to the best of your ability by circling one of the numbers under the answer choice headings, **please forward them to me as soon as possible** so I can begin compiling the data. Again, your help is greatly appreciated.

1. Prior to reading the above, I was unaware that the department has not had a written strategic plan for several years.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

2. I believe it is very important that an organization such as the Fresno Fire Department have a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

3. I believe most organizations similar to the Fresno Fire Department have written strategic plans.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

4. The lack of a written strategic plan for the Fresno Fire Department causes me to have a lower opinion of fire administration personnel.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

5. I believe there is a negative effect on employee morale when there is not a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

6. I believe there is a negative effect on employee performance when there is not a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

7. I believe a written strategic plan is an effective tool to manage and lead an organization.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

8. I do not believe strategic plans should have employee input.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

9. I would personally feel more “ownership” in this organization if I could have input into a strategic plan.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4

10. My personal morale would not change toward this organization if we had a written strategic plan.

Strongly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree
1		2		3	4